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United Church Women

Groups on the Study of the Missionary Obligation of the Church

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I. Is there a universal missionary obligation for all Christians?

1. Acts 1:8 "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth."

Romans 1:14 "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise and to the unwise."

The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, is missionary in content and message.

The Bible is sufficient, but we are helped by the interpretation of the Great Commission through witness of workers in the missionary field.

2. Motives: (historical)

Religious leaders followed political expansion
Love of Christ and the command of Christ
Compassion for human need.

Today's motivation: Sociological as well as religious, in addition to the motives of the first missionaries of the apostolic church.

Constant reappraisal is necessary. Christian culture not to be confused with religion. The real Commission should not be clouded.

3. The Great Commission was meant for all time; it is repeated so often and in so many ways, we would still have the Command. It is the principal meaning of our religion today.

Distinction between home and foreign missions is not valid. Methods in the two fields may be different. The field is the world.

4. The Gospel of God's self-revelation has been committed to the church, as that church is made up of individuals who have carried out their responsibilities. "One loving soul sets another on fire." (Tomorrow Is Here, Latourette and Hogg)

The "Gospel" is well stated in the question.
The nucleus of the gospel is Jesus' life, teaching, death, and resurrection.

(Part I)

5. The history of the Christian Church in all nations proves it can be made meaningful. People living in a "Christian culture" benefit from all the good things without assuming responsibilities. They have never been touched by personal need, nor made themselves receptive to evangelism.

"That we think of progress at all, shows the extent of the influence of Christianity upon us." (The Belief in Progress. John Baillie)

Although the program extends through decades, centuries, milleniums, there is no question of the goal being abandoned.

6. There is no distinction to be made between planting the church where it has not been, and the universal purpose of evangelism.

Yes, there is a missionary obligation placed on each individual person. The individual has the obligation to influence anything that touches him directly. The church is able to have a farther reaching program. No matter what the location, saving man is saving the world. Therefore, each person does have a missionary obligation and should not overlook opportunities of serving in his own community; but that does not relieve him of the obligation to carry the gospel to the world-wide field.

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II. What overseas missionary responsibility have American Christians in the world today?

1. The Christian or non-Christian world cannot be defined geographically.

Christianity, once planted, never dies, no matter what political belief is in power.

2. Rival religions are important in that they are a part of the Nationalistic movement. Also, they are a part of the age-old family tradition.

Christian missionaries are less effective in the educated classes of these old, powerful religions than they are in the nearly illiterate animistic groups.

Yes, we do have responsibility to their adherents.

3. Yes, there are other vital forces that claim religious devotion. Political faiths and movements are time and thought consuming. Religious rituals in secret organizations satisfy people of superficial Christian thinking. Such people do not have the world-wide viewpoint. Such movements supplant church life and are the evil of every nation. Also, many people accept Christian attitudes and consider themselves Christians without church affiliations.

"The more moral my children are, the more difficult they will find the consciousness of sin....." (That They May Have Life." Daniel T. Niles)

4. Yes, there are geographic areas that claim priority in missionary strategy. Resources for doing missionary work are limited. However, ideally, the field is the world. The fact that doors are closed in some areas make a greater influx to those areas that are open.
5. It is good to have mission centers in cities as a training place for native leadership for indigenous churches. It is a sign of growth in our concept of missionaries that agricultural training is required of those going into rural areas.
6. We are gaining much from the "give and take" of fellowship with the younger churches of the mission field. "It is among the younger churches of the mission field that Christian cooperation in virtually every aspect has advanced farthest and farthest." (World Christianity. Henry P. Van Dusen)

(Part II,6)

7. An American youth who wishes to serve the church overseas, and whose mission board has insufficient funds to send him, could serve in a Home Mission field, or there might opening in some other denominational board for overseas work. A missionary "Call" is not necessarily geographic.

We are divided in our opinion as to whether an inter-denominational agency could be possible.

8. What lesson have we learned from the present situation in China?

We have learned the importance of Chinese leadership, because all foreign leadership can be withdrawn under present political domination. Primary emphasis should be placed on training native leadership.

9. Point Four Program and Christian missions.

- A. Christian missions are doing the work which Point Four proposes long before it was proposed.
- B. No
- C. Yes
- D. Our answers confirm traditional American belief in complete separation of Church and State. We are not trying to convert peoples to Americanism, but to Christianity.
- E. It can be a corollary, but it is not a substitute for missions. Oftentimes there is cooperation, i.e., Point Four uses missionaries in the field, but this is not a substitute for presentation of the Gospel.

10. "Younger and older churches are partners in obedience to the Great Commission." (Tomorrow IS Here, Latourette and Hogg

The growth of Christian councils among younger churches has brought emphases to be similar among older churches.

(Part II, 10)

Changes suggested:

- A. Avoid denominational distinctions
- B. Better allocation
- C. Emphasis on rural missions in foreign fields
- D. Re-evaluation of mission schools where Gospel is forbidden; to make sure they are not merely "finishing schools" for foreign religions.

III. My local church and its missionary responsibilities,

1. Missionary obligation.

- A. Personal commitment. Statistics show that 50% of church membership support local church; only 22% for world or missionary outlook. It is necessary for us to be interested in the Gospel personally before we will finance foreign mission work.
- B. See "A"
- C. Personnel. Create an atmosphere in home and church so members of our own family will be interested in mission work. Do what we can to interest young people in our church.
- D. See Part II, question 10

- (1) Study programs from mission boards to enlighten congregation
- (2) Have concrete projects that would include whole congregations, including the men.

2. Total program of the church.

- A. It is not the active concern of the church, as it should be. Most of us do not know what our own denomination is doing, let alone the total program.
- B. The total program of the church is brought out through the World Day of Prayer, help for migrant workers, inter-denominational studies, C R O P.

3. Unlimited potentialities. We need to emphasize Christian stewardship; time, talent, and treasure -- which is larger than tithing.

4. Let us get the "call" away from mysticism down to practical ideas of service. Summer camps are ideal places for working with young people. Missionaries are wonderful for young people to contact. Mission emphasis in Daily Vacation Bible School is the general practice here, with a field trip taken to a camp for migrant workers at Fort Lupton, Colorado. In colleges young people from our congregations go to work camps in home mission fields.

(Part III, 4)

We feel that we are doing too much to make young people aware of their own problems without making them aware of the call to Christian service.

5. We have three state colleges within 36 miles.
Our community has no Jews
We welcome all contacts with foreign students. Churches, service groups, and study groups exchange ideas on religious and political subjects.

We do have Spanish-American people who belong to and are welcomed by the Catholic Church here.

6. Our town, Loveland, Colorado, has a population of 7,000. Small churches such as ours have a spirit of joyous and friendly fellowship. Most churches seem to have a program of constant giving.

Two of the larger congregations in our town have just built new churches, which entail sharp variances of opinion among the memberships, but all the differences were forgotten in the oneness of membership and fellowship.

7. Negatively: We regret the closed mind of some individuals. "People confirm their own prejudices."

Changes:

Make an effort to have a better understanding of the smaller emotional denominations. The inviting features are too often the worship and dining center; the education centers have been neglected in equipment and beauty. Teaching material is good, but we lack trained teachers.

IV. What does it mean to be a responsible Christian in the World Today?

1. One who is conscious of world citizenship is a better local citizen. One ~~who~~ truly believes the field is the world, sees the world at his door.
2. Using every opportunity to be a witness for Christianity.

Saving and giving habits: the church should be first in the family budget.

Investments: Invest money in corporations that are producing beneficial goods rather than demoralizing.

Political choices: consider religious and moral background and practice of individual candidates.

3. How may our community influence the life of the world.

A. Person

- (1) We are proud of our religious leader, Mrs. H. G. Colwell, delegate to the World Council of Churches at Amsterdam. Her influence is felt here and everywhere she goes in her extensive travels.
- (2) Missionaries from our community:
Marian Beebe (Burma)
Eulalia Grether (Egypt)
Verla Elliott (China)
Also several young people in training
- (3) Army Chaplains
- (4) Tourists on the whole from our community are good citizens away from home.

B. Racial Tensions

We have very little opportunity to express our race attitudes due to lack of other races in our community. However, individual contacts have been unusually satisfactory.

- C. We are in the sugar beet industry; we do exploit Mexican Labor. Many evils have been brought to light, and some progress is being made, especially toward permanent residents.

There is an excellent attitude in our schools toward the Mexican children.

(Part IV, S. C.)

4. How many from our church are overseas?

We have members in all the theatres of war and occupation. Their responsibilities are even greater than when they are home. They have an opportunity to set a Christian example. They should identify themselves with a Christian church. It is a chance to overcome race prejudice.

These members should be advised if a mission is near. Church bulletins, letters from the minister and congregation are sent to them. Several young people overseas have been made members of local churches in absentia when the rest of their families have joined.

5. Foreign visitors in the U.S. from Latin America and Asia (see question 5, part III)

We should touch on religion more than we do. Should an Asiatic visitor declare himself a Christian, we realize we have let him take the first step when it should have been ours.

6. Missionary and evangelistic obligation is at the very heart of the Christian faith. We feel optimistic about the general trend. A previous lack of information is being remedied; the laymen are being educated. Every Christian has a personal responsibility to study, use and spread correct information, and to give of his material substance with zeal.

V. Missions and Christian Unity

1. The Protestant Church has become universal through growth brought about greatly by the far-sightedness of great leaders. The united effort has resulted in salutary publicity in papers, circulars, radio. It is impossible for religious minded people to escape the impact. We have seen the ridiculous and narrow-minded false barriers. The obvious joining of Communist efforts has made Christians realize the value of united action.
2. "It is the younger churches who are clearest in their conviction of the obligation to organic church union, and most resolute for its realization.....'that they may all be one.'" (World Christianity, Van Dusen)
3. John 18:20-21. To speak to all the world openly.

Yes, a united church can provide a more compelling witness. Facts that are truly essential come to the foreground; others drop behind.

4. Christian missions have had some geographic setbacks recently due to Communist strength. However, we are in the golden age of the missionary enterprise.

The ^{new} task is the same as the old: Take the gospel to all the world.

5. Ecumenical foundations began in the missionary field in the 1790's with William Carey. Our most outstanding examples are still in the missionary field. These statements are verified by the following books we have studied:

Ecumenical Foundations, Hogg
World Christianity, Van Dusen

6. The unity as expressed in the World Council of Churches has spread the great surge of missionary information.
7. Answered in 1-6 above.
8. Through giving to your own church with a unified budget, you are giving to missions. The implication is so worldwide that the individual giver should be more generous. We give with more confidence, knowing our money will be wisely used.